

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (previously presented): A cutting apparatus for a welding machine comprising a pair of upper and lower blade portions facing each other, an upper blade portion ascending/descending link means for moving the upper blade portion up and down relative to the lower blade portion, a plurality of ascending/descending guide means for guiding abutment between the upper and lower blade portions, and an ascending/descending drive means for ascending/descending the upper blade portion through said upper blade portion ascending/descending link means;

wherein the plurality of ascending/descending guide means comprises an upper blade portion ascending/descending guide means, a lower blade portion ascending/descending guide means, and an ascending/descending guide means for holding a clearance between the upper and lower blade portions; and

wherein at least one of each of the upper blade portion ascending/descending guide means, the lower blade portion ascending/descending guide means and the ascending/descending guide means for holding a clearance between the upper and lower blade portions is a co-use ascending/descending guide means that is shared by the upper blade portion and the lower blade portion so as to guide both the upper blade portion and the lower blade portion.

Claim 2. (previously presented) The cutting apparatus for a welding machine, according to claim 1, wherein said co-use ascending/descending guide means engages end portions of the upper and lower blade portions movably up and down with a guide shaft provided in an apparatus frame so as to extend in parallel with an abutment direction of the upper and lower blade portions.

Claims 3-8 (withdrawn)

Claim 9. (previously presented) A cutting apparatus for a welding machine comprising:

- an upper blade portion;
- a lower blade portion facing the upper blade portion;
- an upper blade portion linkage mechanism that raises and lowers the upper blade portion relative to the lower blade portion;
- a driver coupled to the upper blade portion linkage mechanism, the driver causing the upper blade portion linkage mechanism to raise and lower the upper blade portion relative to the lower blade portion; and
- a plurality of bearing members, comprising:
 - an upper blade portion guide member that guides ascending/descending movement of the upper blade portion,
 - a lower blade portion guide member that guides ascending/descending movement of the lower blade portion, and

a third guide member that maintains a clearance between the upper blade portion and the lower blade portion; and

wherein at least one of the plurality of bearing members is a co-use bearing member that is shared by the upper blade portion and the lower blade portion so as to guide both the raising and lowering of the upper blade portion and the lower blade portion.

Claim 10. (previously presented) The cutting apparatus for a welding machine according to claim 9, further comprising a lower blade portion linkage mechanism that raises and lowers the lower blade portion relative to the upper blade portion.

Claim 11. (previously presented) The cutting apparatus for a welding machine according to claim 9, wherein the upper blade portion linkage mechanism comprises a pair of parallel links; and the drive comprises a piston coupled to the pair of parallel links through a coupling link.